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**Transcending the Dialectics of Power:  
*An Alternative Revolution for South Africa***

*by*

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## Transcending the Dialectics of Power



## The Alternative Revolution of South Africa: *Transcending the dialectics of power*

From the 1950ies until 1993, South Africa was engaged in a dialectic power struggle between the oppressive and violent Apartheid regime (i.e. the **"VOLK"**) and an equally violent (*communist backed*) revolutionary movement (i.e. the *political activists of the "PEOPLE"*).

Concerned about the violence on both sides and a future escalation, it searched for a PEACEFUL way of transcending this struggle and formulated strategies of an ALTERNATIVE REVOLUTION.

**NOTE:** The strategies do not necessarily occur in this specific order, but are also parallel and iterative.

## Reducing Tension....



## 1. REDUCING TENSION

Various strategies were proposed to reduce tensions in all areas of life, both in general and in specific situations as they arose.

**NOTE:** In the psychological and change management literature these are typically referred to as de-escalation strategies.

...by Refocussing



## 2. REFOCUSING

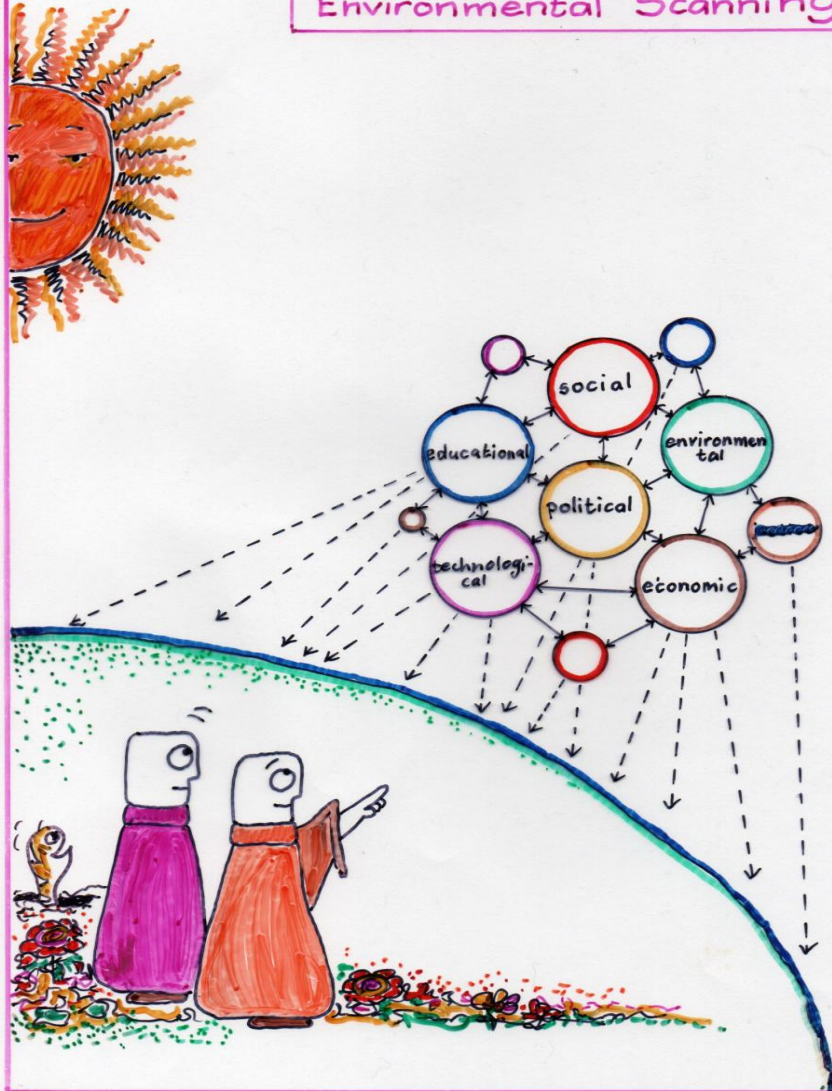
The IFR asserted that the handing over of power from one regime driven by an exclusive ideology to another regime, also driven by an exclusive and conflicting ideology, will merely perpetuate the violent dialectic power struggle.

Instead the alternative revolution promotes a strategy of prolonged negotiations between the conflicting political parties, with the purpose of exploring a shared future in an issue specific (*instead of ideology-driven*) manner, in order to align the worldviews of the opposing parties.

Thereby a synthesis of a peaceful and inclusive future can arise.

The following strategies explain in more detail what this involves.

### Focussing on Context Environmental Scanning



### 3. ENVIRONMENTAL SCANNING: *Threats and Opportunities*

Environmental scanning is a powerful technique for refocusing conflicting parties.

It reveals the challenges that any government *(as well as organisation and person)* is likely to be confronted with, regarding the future.

The IFR specialises in environmental scanning and has a vast databank of cultural, economic, political, technological and ecological trends of South Africa and an understanding of their inherent threats and opportunities for the future of the country.

Through facilitating environmental scanning sessions with delegates from public and private sector organisations, the IFR learned that environmental scanning opens the mind of the participants and makes them more willing to embrace change.

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Incremental Change:  
The Threat



## 4. INCREMENTAL CHANGE: *The Threat*

Many of the trends identified by the IFR represent “boiling frogs”, which are complex problems (like poverty, unemployment, crime, infrastructure problems, pandemics, school drop-outs, pollution, desertification, etc.).

An analysis of such problems reveals that they that get worse over time, are multi-dimensional, shape-shift (*i.e. depending on who looks at them*), co-produce each other, change continuously, and that they cannot be solved, because they emerge from the pursuit of diverse interests by different interest parties.

The IFR conducted many environmental scanning sessions with participants subscribing to different ideologies. It was observed that in identifying the co-factors (*or co-causes*) of a problem, each ideology made some unique contributions, thereby creating the understanding that the whole problem is an emergence from the interaction of diverse problem co-factors and transcends ideological differences.

Often, this led to a rethinking of the challenges of the future on both sides of the ideological divide.



## 5. VISIONARY FOCUS

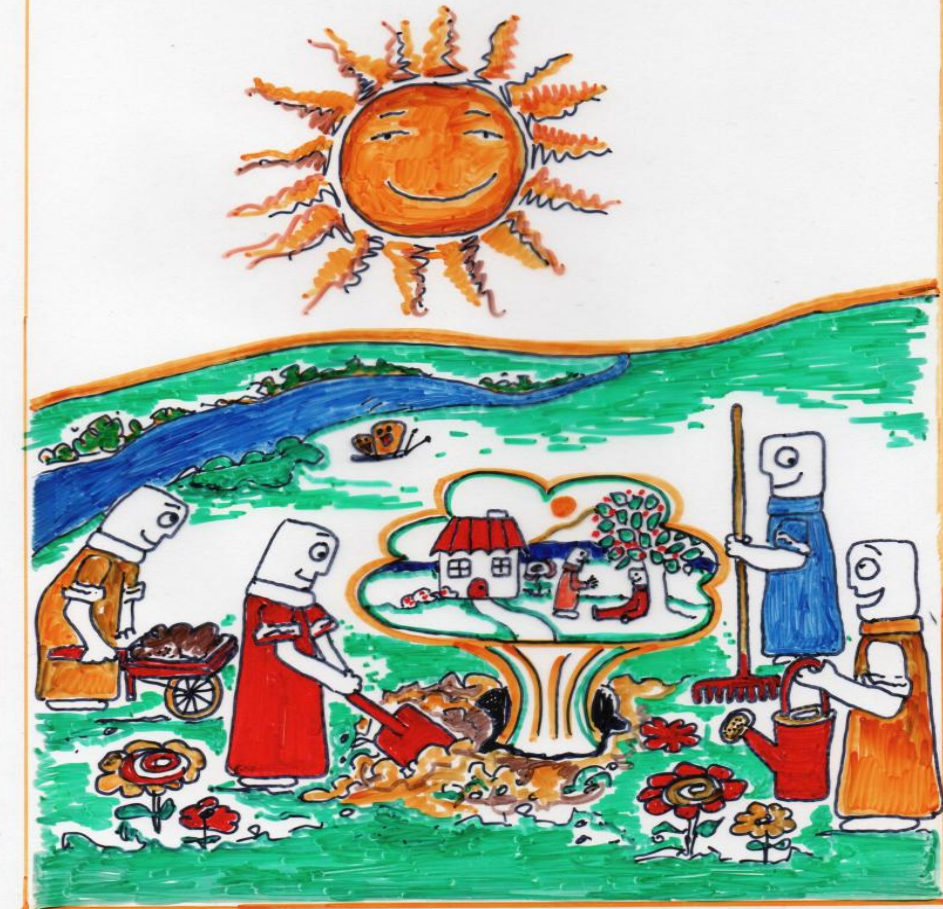
As Albert Einstein observed: *“Problems cannot be solved with the thinking that gave rise to them”*.

Thus complex problems cannot be solved, but need to be dissolved in the course of creating an ideal future, analogous to dissolving disease by creating health. In praxis, this involves brainstorming ideals that should be put in the place of the problem and each of its co-factors (such as health replacing disease) and designing strategies with which to achieve (or move towards) the ideals.

By extending the environmental scanning sessions into an exploration of a more ideal future, it was found that although participants subscribed to different ideologies, they nevertheless desired similar (if not the same) ideals (as outcomes for the future).

At the same time, the proposed strategies for achieving (or approximating) the ideal outcomes often were different according to ideology. However, far from causing conflict, it became obvious that those different strategies are complementary and actually necessary to co-produce the desired ideal outcome.

**ACTION PROGRAMME:  
INTERACTIVISM and COPRODUCTION**



## 6. ACTION PROGRAMME: *Interactivity and Co-production*

Once a shared vision of the ideal future has been determined, each of the original problem co-producing parties has to make its unique contribution to bring it about.

This implies answering the question “What do I need to contribute to bring about the shared vision?”

The shared collective future is achieved (*or approximated*), if each part (*i.e. sub-system*) plans and implements its unique contribution to the shared design of the whole.

For example, in transforming the education system of a society, each of its sub-systems (*e.g. the parents, kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and the tertiary technicians and universities*) has a unique contribution to make.

(NOTE: If one of those sub-systems is not adhering to the shared overarching vision of what education should ideally be, the other sub-systems will experience problems and the overarching education vision will not be fully attainable.)

The ideal design is co-produced by the interaction of all parts of the system, inspired by a shared overarching vision.



## MADONNA on the MOUNTAIN



## 7. MADONNA ON THE MOUNTAIN

This story was told by **Dana Meadows** (of *Club of Rome fame*), during her visit to the IFR (in support of a peaceful transformation of South Africa).

The story illustrates that change must be inspired by and aligned with the ethos (*i.e. values and beliefs*) of the people associated with the change.

### THE STORY:

Sometime and somewhere in South America, the *World Bank* was asked to finance an irrigation scheme. However, before building the irrigation, the community wanted to erect a large concrete madonna on the mountain.

The *World Bank* refused and the project stalled. Eventually, the bank relented and financed the building of the madonna.

After completing their madonna on the mountain (*and the customary celebrations*), the people built the irrigation scheme around it for less than the originally allocated money (*including the cost for the concrete for the madonna*).

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## Incremental Change: The Opportunity



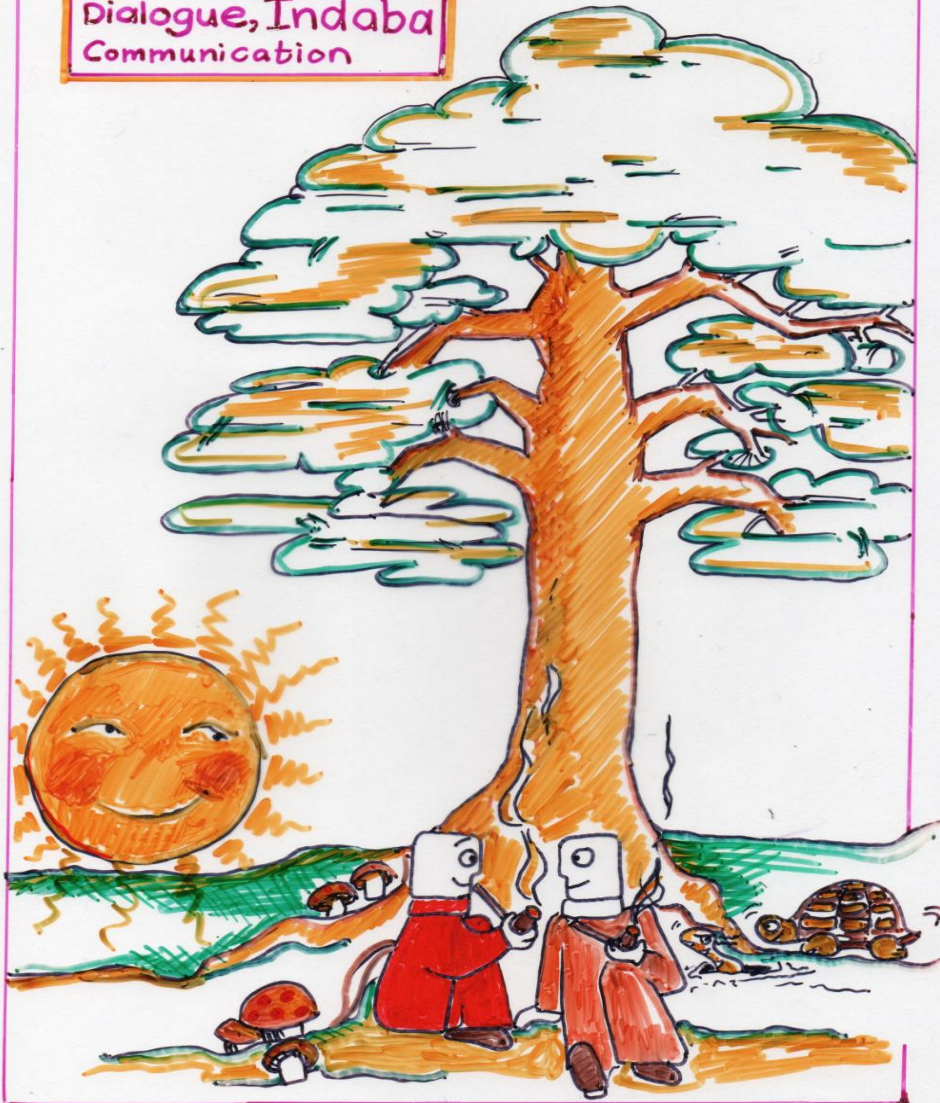
## 8. INCREMENTAL CHANGE: *The Opportunity*

Once upon a time, there was a visionary **man who planted acorns** wherever he went.

The acorns grew into trees, then a forest, which attracted fungi, other plants, birds and other animals and even rain and thereby became a thriving ecosystem. After some time it even supported a profitable forest industry.

The story illustrates that if consistent actions (*however small*) are taken, and provided that they are inspired by a larger vision, their result can be unexpectedly huge and synergistic.

### Dialogue, Indaba Communication



## 9. COMMUNICATION: *Dialogue, Indaba*

Negotiations as *INDABA* (i.e. sitting and smoking together and listening to each other's stories and different points of view), is a familiar African concept.

The IFR promoted design indabas to create win / win and synergistic ideas for a shared, peaceful and prosperous future for all South Africans.

To emphasise the importance of personal interaction during negotiations, the “dancing” Congress of Vienna (i.e. *Wiener Kongress*) which established a lasting peace in Europe after the ravages of the Napoleonic wars, was used as a case study.

This was promoted with the slogan that “South Africa does not need a *National Party*, but a national party”. (NOTE: *The National Party was the ruling Apartheid party*).

During the negotiations of South Africa's political transition, there was indeed great emphasis on personal interaction between the former “enemies”. Although there were no dances, there were braais (i.e. *the traditional South African barbecue*), fishing trips and game drives, during which informal discussions between individuals took place.

## Communicating Action



## 10. COMMUNICATING ACTION

By communicating what is designed, planned and implemented and what outcomes are achieved, others are inspired to follow suit and participate in doing “their thing” for a shared ideal future.

Because of the interaction of systems, a cross-fertilisation of ideas occurs and change in one area makes changes in other areas possible. Thereby an avalanche of constructive actions is triggered.

!!(b)

Competitive  
Strategy  
Win/Lose



## 11. COMPETITIVE STRATEGY: *Win / Lose*

Competition can be useful  
in promoting efficiency in the economy,  
or to test various models and strategies  
(e.g. *piloting alternatives*),  
in order to find out which works best.

May the best win!

Competitive Strategy  
win/Lose = Lose/Lose

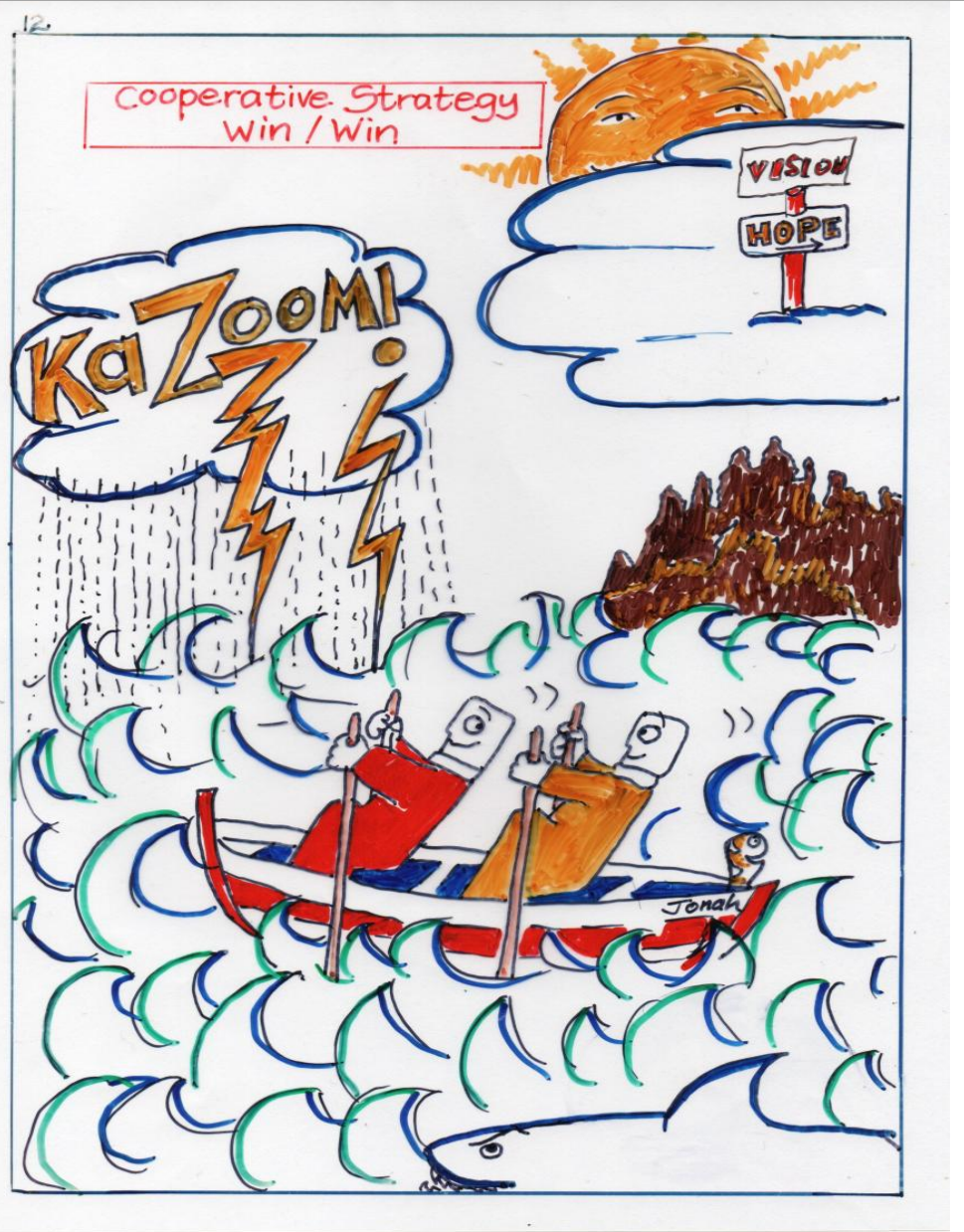


## 12. COMPETITIVE STRATEGY: Lose / Lose

However, if competitive thinking is applied inappropriately, the win / lose approach produces lose / lose.

In a conflict situation, win / lose thinking can give rise to and perpetuate a vicious cycle of violence (e.g. *I hit you, you hit me back, etc.*).

This can prevent the establishment of a peaceful co-existence in which the interests of all parties are considered and (*as much as possible*) met.



### 13. COOPERATIVE STRATEGY: *Win / Win*

A vicious win / lose cycle can be transformed into a virtuous win / win cycle (e.g. *I support you, you support me back, etc.*) by “turning the other cheek” and “forgiving seventy times seven” as suggested by Jesus.

South Africa demonstrated such a turn-around through its *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, which enabled all its citizens to come to terms with their past on a morally accepted basis and lay the foundation for reconciliation and a shared and peaceful future. It also promoted healing in all parts of society.

Win / win is also generated through cooperative strategy derived from a shared ideal design (or *vision*) of the future. As each part of a system works towards the shared ideal within their sphere of influence and with their available resources, they collectively bring about a more desirable future for all.



## 14. LEADERSHIP

Rethinking an existing situation and being motivated to do things differently, requires visionary leadership.

The transformation of each system of society needs its own function-relevant leaders.

From a w/holistic perspective, the leader works to promote the interests of the part s/he represents, while also considering and promoting the interests of the other parts and the whole in a balanced manner.





## 15. THE CRITICAL NUMBER

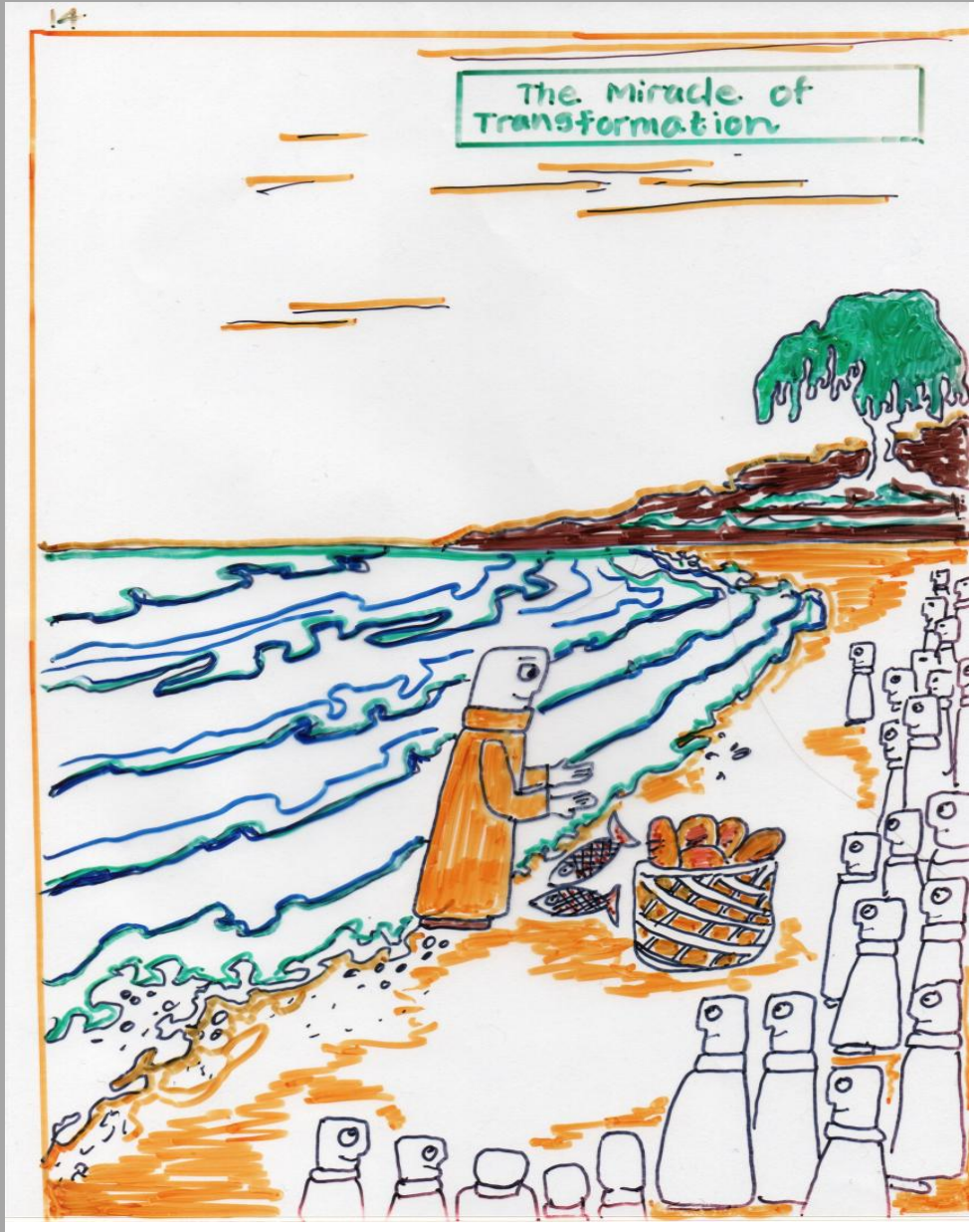
A system can get transformed, if a critical number of its members work towards its change, analogous to the “*Hundredth’s Monkey*” story, or the yeast in the dough.

In changing the physical reality of a system, every person’s vote, voice and action within their sphere of influence counts (*i.e. is yeast*).

From a reductionist perspective, individuals are likely to consider themselves as isolated and powerless and their “little” actions as insignificant.

However, from a w/holistic perspective each individual is a unique member of society and their actions (*however small*) are indispensable (*provided they are inspired by a shared vision of the future*), analogous to the unique puzzle stone that completes the picture of the whole.

According to consciousness research (*e.g. on the Maharishi Effect*), the physical reality of systems can also be changed, if a critical number of people enters and enlivens the collective in-formation field through meditation and prayer.



## 16. THE MIRACLE OF TRANSFORMATION

Once a critical number is achieved, a system seems to transform almost miraculously and far beyond expectation.

The peaceful transformation of South Africa is such a “miracle”.

A critical number of individuals and organisations from all sectors of society and from within different ideological persuasions, worked very hard and for a long time to influence physical reality through their various actions and participated in group meditations and prayers to influence conceptual reality and thereby in-forms (*i.e. puts form into*) society in physical reality.

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